

Hunger grows in America:

Demand government take over food industry

Hunger in America is growing at the rate of 10% per year. It is a product of the market economy. But there is way to guarantee everyone has enough to eat. *Turn to page 3*



Josh Collins, left, a homeless man living in Las Vegas, helps distribute free soup and bread to other homeless people in Frank Wright Park in Las Vegas on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2006. In July, Las Vegas became one of the first cities to make it illegal to feed the poor in parks.

AP PHOTO/MARLENE KARAS

Also in this issue:

See inside for US Social Forum coverage and more

Public health cuts make it clear The future is up to us

Those wanting a glimpse of what life will be like for the new class of poor under a Democratic administration in 2008 need look no further than Cook County, Illinois. There, under the leadership of the Cook County /Chicago Democratic Party, the Cook County government is balancing its budget on the backs of those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Faced with a \$500 million budget shortfall, the county's Board of Commissioners has slashed more than 1300 county jobs, most of them in health care. More than 1,000 hospital and clinic jobs have been cut, including 260 doctors and 230 nurses. Also, 12 of the county's 26 community health clinics were closed, including seven which were located in schools.

These devastating cuts are being imposed on a public health care system already mired in crisis. Up to the early 1980s, the Cook county health care system functioned as a safety net providing comprehensive health care free of charge. The system served as a backup to a private health care system financed by health insurance plans won through collective bargaining led by workers in the major industries.

However, over the past quarter century, hundreds of thousands of workers in Chicago and Cook County (as elsewhere) have lost good-paying manu-

facturing jobs with benefits as the large corporations "outsourced" production to low-wage areas of the world or eliminated the need for living labor through robotics. Those whose jobs are being eliminated by automation and globalization are a new class of poor. Today, the Cook County health care system is overwhelmed by these casualties of robotics and globalization. Presently, 26 percent of Cook County residents, or 1.4 million people, are uninsured. The corporations have no intention of providing health care for labor they don't need, and the cuts in Cook County's public health system are further evidence of this.

Because the Cook County cuts are occurring under the leadership of the Democratic Party of Cook County/Chicago, responsibility for the cuts and the toll they're taking in human life and suffering rests squarely with the Democrats. For over a half century, the party has held absolute control of city and county government. Its dominance of the political life of the 5.5 million people of the second largest county in the U.S. also makes it a major force in determining the electoral strategy of the Democratic Party nationally.

The question is why would the Democratic Party, which claims to be "the party of labor, of minorities and of the poor," mount an aggressive assault



against its "base?" The answer is clear; under an economic system in which jobs that pay enough to provide for a family and a future are being eliminated by the computer chip, this corporate party can no longer masquerade as the champion of poor and working people.

As the continuing tragedy of Katrina discloses so vividly, the politicians and the government are committed to denying resources and services to people no longer needed by the corporations. The Cook County budget cuts and similar actions being taken in thousands of communities across the country are proof that it is capitalism, and not the

people, that the Democratic Party serves.

The growing millions of the newly dispossessed and impoverished must be made conscious of the need to organize themselves for political action independent of the major political parties in defense of their right to survive and thrive. They must be educated to the reality that it is the historic mission of their class to reorganize society on the basis of distribution of the necessities of life according to need. From this point on, how things come out hinges on what we, the people, do. We must chart our own course. The future is up to us.

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PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

The People's Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can't or won't feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win — the capitalists or the growing mass of poor — will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society "by the people, of the people, for the people."

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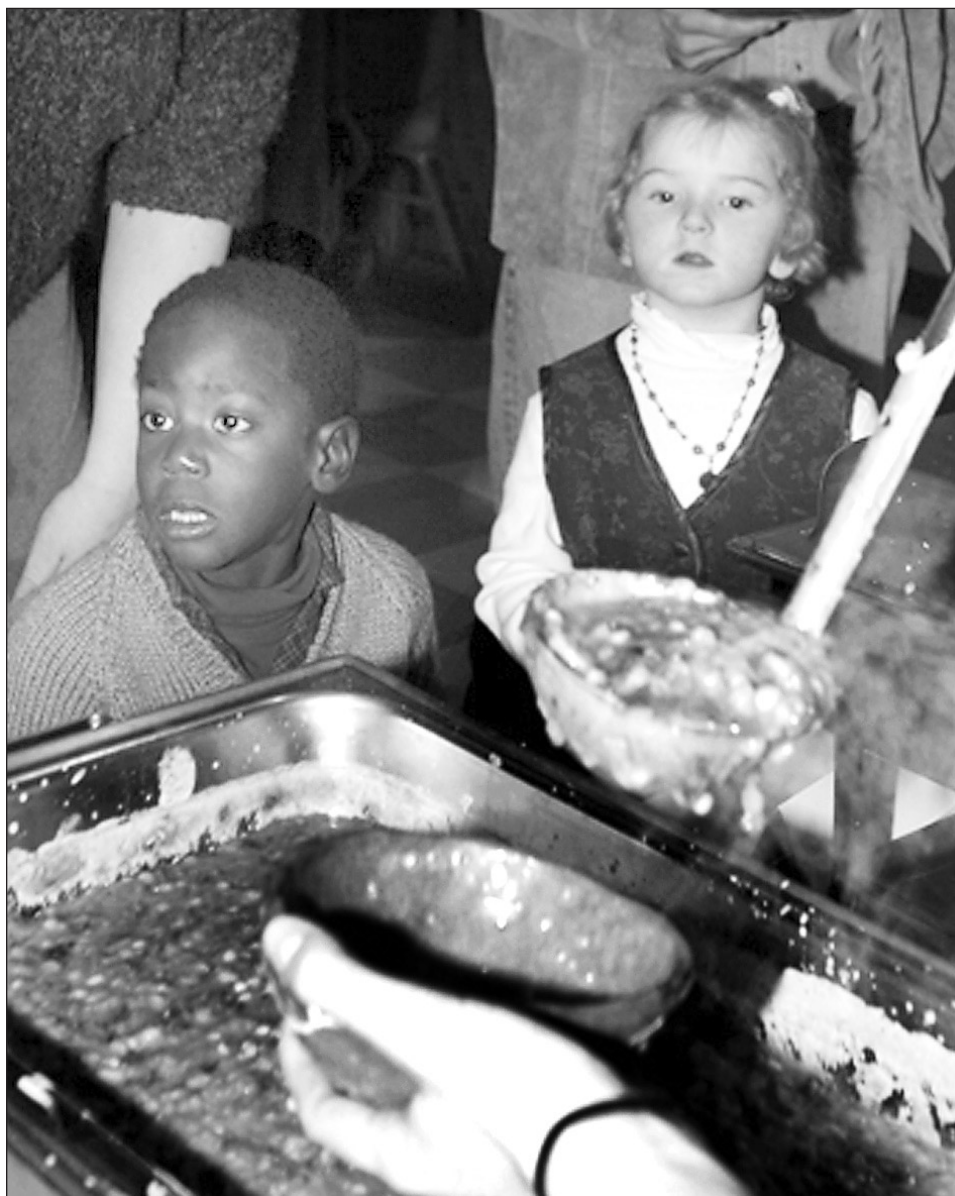
Hunger grows in America: Demand government take over food industry

COVER STORY

We have all seen the horrifying photographs of starving children in "far-away" countries. Every five seconds, a child dies from hunger. Almost one-sixth of the world is hungry. Charities tell Americans that by helping one hungry child, this human catastrophe can end. So, we give. But, hunger has not ended. It is growing. It is even on the rise in America — the wealthiest country in the world. Although America has always had hunger, today, it is reaching people who never imagined they would be standing in food lines. Hunger in America is growing at the rate of 10% per year. It is a product of the market economy.

Though rarely discussed in Congress, over 35 million Americans don't know where their next meal will come from. This is one in eight people. What is also new is that one-third of those seeking food aid today are (or were) middle-income workers. Declining incomes and job loss resulting from the shift from industry to global, automated production and a market economy are at the root of the new hunger. Food production today is based on what the market will bear. If you don't have money to buy food, you starve.

What makes this so indefensible is that today, advances in science and technology have for the first time created the productive capacity to feed the world. There's no reason for one person to be hungry. To hide this truth, hunger has been presented as an economic problem caused by poverty. In fact, it is a political problem caused by an economic system where the production and



Many millions go hungry in the U.S. and throughout the world, yet we can produce enough food to feed everyone.

PHOTO/DONATED

distribution of food is privately owned. Global conglomerates such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Monsanto, Cargill, and Kellogg's (to name a few)

own most of the world's food. Every step these giant corporations take to increase profits creates greater hunger and misery. For example, ADM, the

world's largest producer of ethanol, saw their profits double as a result of ethanol demand. The resulting shortage of corn (used in ethanol production) caused the price of chickens, meat and eggs to rise 15%.

Many people wonder why the government won't help people. Under capitalism, the role of government is to unleash the economy for the corporations. After WWII, social programs and a "war on poverty" came about at a time when corporations were consolidating their hold over an expanding economy and millions of healthy workers were needed to expand production. But today, with robots and computers doing more of the work, the corporations have no need to maintain a healthy workforce. No presidential candidate can seriously address this because they and their political parties are funded by the corporations.

ENDING HUNGER

No one has the right to control food while millions starve. Until society takes over the giant food corporations (and all other industries that produce society's necessities) and runs them in the interests of the public, hunger and mass starvation will increase. Socially necessary production must be public, not private property. We need a cooperative society where necessities are produced and distributed to all based on their needs rather than for the profit and enrichment of the few.

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Communism and Christianity

By Sandy Perry

In the words of Bob Marley, we are in a “war for America.” World economic revolution has created a political, moral, and spiritual crisis. Jobs are disappearing, living standards are plummeting, and poverty is spreading. As the government abandons the poor to the tender mercies of the global marketplace, it forces us to decide who we are as a people. Are we the country of our ancestors, who twice rose up in revolutions to right injustice? Or will we stand by while soulless corporations violently loot our own people and others?

As spiritual and religious leaders we have no choice. Our Creator has commanded us to take a stand against exploitation and immorality. But effective resistance requires vision and program. Most of us agree we need to replace the current government — a government by and for corporations — with one by and for the people, and establish an economy based on human need, not private profit. Such a system is generally called communism.

The problem in America is that for

the last 60 years the word “communism” has been at the center of a massive Cold War propaganda struggle. It has been stripped of its original, literal meaning and loaded down with ideological baggage. Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, and other 20th century religious revolutionaries avoided the word communism because it was otherwise impossible to maneuver outside the established ideological camps. But now, the Cold War is over, and workers who have been replaced by computers and robots do not have funds for food, clothing, housing, and health care. Communism today is a practical question of how to distribute these life’s necessities to millions of Americans.

This makes it possible and necessary for revolutionaries to set aside ideology and start educating our people on the true meaning of the word communism.

According to historians, all property was originally held in common, and has been for most of human history. The Bible recognizes and sanctions this as God’s plan (Psalm 24, Leviticus 25). Where private property is affirmed in the Bible, it is only in certain situations on the condition that it facilitates the livelihood of the people. Where private property is used to exploit, exclude, or enslave—as it most frequently has been—it is unequivocally condemned.

The word “private” reflects this history of abuse. It is derived from the Latin word “privare,” meaning to separate or take away. It has the same root as the words deprive, privation, and deprivation. These words accurately describe the origins of private property: it was forcibly taken from others and then used to subjugate them. Owners denied people the means to livelihood except on terms that robbed them of the fruits of their labor. This was done crudely and primitively in slave and feudal societies. Capitalism perfected it and expanded it into a global system.

“Deprivation” is also the best description of the effects of corporate plunder in our communities today.

The word “communism,” on the other hand, comes from the Latin word “communis,” an adjective meaning “in common, public, general, shared by all or many.” It has the same root as common, commonwealth, communion, and community. Especially Christians have always held up these concepts as positive and beneficial. In fact, the related Greek word “koinonia” has a special place in the New Testament and in Christian tradition. Koinonia is usually translated to mean fellowship or communion, and is derived from the word “koinos,” meaning common. In the Bible it is used to express the mutual re-

lationship of the early Christians with Christ and with each other. It first appears in the Bible in Acts 2 to describe the fellowship of the believers who “had everything in common” and “gave to anyone as he or she had need.”

Paul described the koinonia or communism in the Christian community as an integral part of its relationship with Christ, expressed in the celebration of the Eucharist. Koinonia was not only a sharing of resources but was inseparable from the worship of the living God.

It is time for practical revolutionaries to separate and reclaim “communism” from the ideological straitjackets of the past period. For Christians, communism is a Biblical and holy concept that describes the beloved community. It is the moral and spiritual heart of our movement and our heritage, the foundation of our faith. It does not serve us to deny it or reject it because we may disagree with one or another of its modern forms. The question is to understand its essence and create a form that works for the task at hand.

Above all, we should not allow our attitude toward communism to be determined by wicked propagandists who have no concern for justice for the poor. Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.

They say it’s thirty now



Aquil Charlton speaking at a rally for youth in Chicago.

PHOTO/RICH CAPALBO

By Mama Brenda Matthews

This year has been incredible for the Chicago Public Schools. A little over 30 students murdered from around the city. The newspapers say that’s one child per week for the school year. These students were brutally shot, stabbed, raped, and killed for no reason. Senseless deaths and they keep happening and still there is nothing being done. Thirty young people who miss their destiny, 30 who never went to college, 30 who never presented to the world their talent, purpose and their passion for life.

We had a rally where the rain came and stayed for most of the event, but the leaders of this event were the young people. Sharing their poetry, sharing their stories, sharing their testimonies, from the heart they blessed each of us who stood wet under umbrellas and listened. The most important piece was that we as the community listened to our children. If this issue of violence is to be addressed we must bring our young people to the table. We must no longer decide what is the best interest for them, but let them work

towards change.

As we watch these upcoming rallies protesting the violence and sending out urgent messages for change, we see young people carrying signs, and most recently at St. Sabina the youth were carrying caskets to symbolize the deaths of those young people who were slain. What I did not see were young people who were asked to speak. It’s time to pass the mic to our children and let them work for change. Our job as the community is to assist and provide training and equip young people with skills to get the job done.

Our youth are dying because we treat them like they’re helpless and hopeless. They are the new kingdom builders and world changers. Jesse Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, Russell Simmons and Al Sharpton do not speak for our children. If the so-called leaders of this country want to see change, they must bring the young people to the table and let their voices be heard.

I ask you HOW MANY MORE WILL DIE? SOMEBODY BETTER SAY SOMETHING BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE.

'Society is responsible to force government to act,' says Nashville homeless organizer

By Sandy Reid

Alonzo Fortune, a life-long resident of Nashville, Tennessee, is a staff intern at the Nashville Homeless Power Project, an organization made up of homeless or formerly homeless people. "We confront the root causes of poverty and oppression. We believe that housing and health care is a basic human right," he said. "Homelessness is growing in Nashville to an estimated at 3,000 to 4000 people, not counting those who may live with friends or sleep on couches," he said. During the mayoral campaign, a candidate said they had seen more white homeless than Blacks. "The numbers are high whichever ethnic group you look at," said Alonzo. There's a great number of Black, as well as white and Hispanic. There are many reasons for homelessness here. One is

the low living wage in comparison to the cost of housing. A person needs to work 40 hours a week at \$10.54 an hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment. That would be around \$524 a month. If you are making minimum wage, you can't afford rent given the cost of transportation, food, and utilities."

The Nashville Project focuses on the city's responsibility. "We get in the political arena and try to get political figures to address homelessness and appropriate funding for housing. Here in Nashville, we did an 'Urban Plunge' where the mayoral candidates were asked to spend a night on the street in the hope that as mayor he will do something." One of the candidates who took up the offer was struck by the sheer numbers of homeless people sleeping on benches. Another was kicked out of a bar after asking for a bag of potato chips.

Alonzo was in Philadelphia recently and was staggered at how many businesses have left and the numbers of abandoned buildings while the homeless are in the street. "I believe as human beings we need housing. If you don't have a home, you can't sustain a happy life," he said. "I'm sure there will be collaboration of different organizations around the country to come together and organize a campaign around ending homelessness. It is one thing to point fingers at a city council or a federal government. But, there comes a time when the citizens of this country have a responsibility to force the local or federal government to act. As a society, we have to insist that these issues be addressed."

Alonzo's vision is for a new society is where racial issues or class will not be common—a society in which all people

are equal and have the same opportunities. "In this city, even though there are a lot of white homeless, as well as Black, there is still a lot of oppression based on race. It needs to be addressed nationally, not just here or in the South."

"I went to Tent City, the largest homeless community in Nashville, and Blacks and whites were separated. The Black homeless were in this corner and all the whites on other side. I thought this is really crazy. Even when you are so poor you make a home out of vinyl tarp found in the street, you still separate yourself by race. We live in a capitalistic society. It has its good and bad points. But as long as there are haves and have nots, there will also be people who are homeless and deprived of necessities because that is the system. What people are afraid to admit is that the whole system will have to be revamped, and that it is a little scary."

Will Fresno's homeless people be put into a concentration camp?



Cynthia Greene.



Big Sue.

PHOTOS/MIKE RHODES

By Mike Rhodes

Speaking before the Fresno City Council on June 19, Al Williams who is a homeless man in the Roeding Park area, said "you are trying to put people into a concentration camp...I'd rather be in jail than a concentration camp." Williams was referring to the city's plan to force all homeless people into a 30,000 square-foot lot that has no shade and is fenced in on all sides.

Cynthia Greene, who lives in a homeless encampment on G and California street, said she would not be forced "into that concentration camp. They don't have any shade, it is all fenced in, and full of goat head thorns." Williams and Greene spoke up for their rights as the City Council debated a new city ordinance that would ban camping (without a permit) in the City of Fresno. The ordinance is targeting the thousands of homeless people (the latest estimate is that there are over

8,000 homeless people) in this community. If passed, this ordinance would add to other ordinances directed at the homeless, including one passed last year that makes it a crime to push a shopping cart, and an earlier ordinance that makes it illegal to panhandle.

Becky Johnson, a homeless advocate in Santa Cruz, California, said the 9th Circuit Court ruled in 2006 that citing people for sleeping or sheltering themselves at night in a situation in which insufficient shelter exists, constitutes 'cruel and inhuman punishment' and is forbidden constitutionally. She said "those cited under Fresno's new law might turn right around and sue the City for damages."

The ordinance was recommended by a homeless task force headed by the Rev. Larry Arce. There are no homeless people on the "Homeless Task Force. The stated goal is the establishment of a plot of land where the homeless can camp. This is a part of Fresno Mayor

Alan Autry's initiative to set up a "free zone" where homeless people can go. This camp would have portable toilets, trash bins, running water, and a trailer from the County of Fresno that will provide social services.

Big Sue, a homeless woman, said she thought the city is trying to push them as far south as they can. Last month, City Council member Jerry Duncan called in to a local right wing talk show indicating the goal was to move homeless people so they are not so visible in the downtown. At a June 19 City Council meeting, Duncan complained about people who give the homeless food and clothing. He appeared to be seriously considering an ordinance that would ban people from feeding and clothing the homeless.

Can the City of Fresno successfully manage homeless people by forcing them onto a small plot of land in the industrial section of the city and passing increasingly repressive ordinances

against them? Cynthia Greene said, "If this ordinance is passed it will be challenged. It was challenged in Los Angeles and they had to back down." The homeless in Fresno will use whatever tools they have to stop this cruel and inhumane treatment, stop the unconstitutional criminalization of poverty, and fight against their confinement in the proposed concentration camp. Cynthia Green said "homelessness is created by the government, not by the people. It is created by corporations, business both large and small." As hard as life is on the street, Cynthia said she would not go to what she describes as a "concentration camp" being set up by the City of Fresno.

See <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/06/20/18428838.php> for the complete version of this article. For a list of articles about the struggle for civil liberties for Fresno homeless people, see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/homelessness.htm>



VOICES FROM U.S. SOCIAL FORUM: ATLANTA JUNE 27–JULY 1

Up to 15,000 organizers and movement builders gathered in Atlanta at the U.S. Social Forum. The clarion call was “Another World Is Possible — Another U.S. Is Necessary!” The unprecedented attendance stems from the dire economic and political changes in today’s world. The shift from an industrial-based economy to automated production with few workers, the growing poverty alongside the unprecedented wealth and consolidation of the giant corporations over every aspect of our lives, the blatant government-corporate disregard for Mother Nature, coupled with the U.S. drive for global domination that could spark a nuclear disaster, set the conditions for this historic gathering. People at the event understand that the source of all of humanity’s problems is capitalism, a system based on the private ownership of things indispensable to society. Developing the strategies to achieve “another world” based on public ownership is the next step forward for humanity. In this light, the People’s Tribune opens up its pages to all who strive to educate the mass of poor in the U.S. about the new world that is possible. In this issue of the paper, we highlight voices from some of the workshops at the U.S. Social Forum. Call 800-691-6888 or email info@peopletribune.org to submit articles for next month’s edition.

— THE EDITORS

Demanding Public Housing & Ending Homelessness

CHICAGO. Public housing is the only resource in place to reverse homelessness. We’re trying to build a national coalition to fight the systematic problem. We organize via the media, grassroots, make hip-hop songs, and go after legislation. In Chicago, over 16,000 public housing units are being destroyed with only 1000 being built. This capitalist system banks on corporations versus the people. Housing is the new ‘stock’ in America. We need a national movement to save public housing and to expose the atrocities.

— J.R. Flemming, Coalition to Protect Public Housing

NEW ORLEANS. On August 29 —the second anniversary of the man-made disaster meant to kill us—there will be a tribunal to take testimony from everybody about what happened and how, in order to expose what the U.S. government did to promote our demise. As soon as the levies broke and they thought everyone was dead, Congressman Richard Baker, said ‘we couldn’t get rid of public housing so God did it for us.’ This summer we’re going to do whatever we can to disrupt New Orleans. Come on down. The New Orleans struggle is not the only struggle, but it is endemic of the worst. Whatever this national movement does, we’re in.— Endesha Juakal

ATLANTA. The public housing authorities are in partnership with Atlanta’s mayor and the majority of the City Council. The developers

own City Hall, and 9600 people are in danger of being displaced by 2010 if evictions don’t stop. AHA checks the criminal records of residents’ grand children and evicts people on one strike and you’re out now by the hundreds. That’s why we don’t have thousands of residents here today. They are terrified. We were even infiltrated by their public relations staff person at our session. They are taking names and will kick people out for little or no reason. This is a life and death issue, and it’s happening in this city, the home of Dr. King, who would be here with us today. We ask for your support. We are putting a “Notice of Non-compliance” on the Atlanta Housing Authority’s office.

—Anita Beaty, Atlanta Taskforce for the Homeless

MIAMI. The attack on public housing is part of a general attack of the upper class on the working class, and on all of us in the city. If we are going to place demands on HUD, we may want to incorporate demands around jobs, education, and training. Because of the deep relationship between the U.S. government and the upper classes and developers we may want to think about placing demands on the developers.

— Tony Romano, Miami Workers Center

PHILADELPHIA. We live in a country with more abandoned properties than homeless people. We as current and former homeless people bear an important responsibility. Homelessness exists because people of all walks of life are not organized.

— Cheri Honkala, Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign



Keeping Water Public

DETROIT. Over 45,000 people in Detroit are without water. This is a straight up class fight. You don’t have to be Black, Hispanic, Native American—but you do have to be poor for these folks to kick your behind. Access to public housing, water, and healthcare is forbidden on the basis of being poor. We’ve had demonstrations with tens of thousands. We developed a Water Affordability Plan, but government failed to implement it. We’re upping the ante. We’re going to start training people on how to turn back on water. We have an explosive homeless problem with 40,000 houses in foreclosure. People can’t pay water so they’re kicked out. Why are corporations looking to privatize public water? Detroit and Wayne County have been the number one world auto manufacturers for the past thirty years. We’re still number one, but with about 81% of the workforce laid off. As soon as they are able to install a dashboard in a car with electronics — you won’t need a human to manufacture a car again. So with rise of technology and the global market, the corporations are coming to take the earth. This means you no longer have a right to have water. If you can’t pay for it, you can’t have it. Water should be owned by the people. This thing is topsy turvey because capitalism deals only with private ownership and profit.

— Maureen Taylor, State Chair, National Welfare Rights Organization

Domestic Workers Organize

NEW YORK. The last national gathering of domestic worker organizations was over 65 years ago. This meeting is historic. We are trying to connect different domestic worker organizations from west to east coast and other major cities across the US. Globalization is causing massive displacement of human labor, especially women. Over 90% of domestic workers in the U.S. are women. I come from the Philippines. I was a professional back home. But because of worsening poverty and unemployment, I made the difficult decision to come here to support my children through school. We came to have a piece of the ‘American Dream.’ What we got was a nightmare. We are temporary workers. We fear being deported. We work in isolation. On top of that, the U.S. labor laws exclude us from union organization and basic labor rights. So we are trying to organize to better ourselves. Our vision is to have a society where families are not forced to separate just to have a livelihood.

— Linda Abad, Damayan Migrant Workers Assoc.

We organize domestic workers and day laborers, focusing on house cleaners. In California, we are doing coalition work. We have incredibly strong leaders. I want a world where domestic workers will have healthcare and vacations, where people will not have to work when they have a horrible headache or their hand is cut.

— Guillermina Castellanos, Women’s collective organizer, day labor program, S.F.

Photos, from top, left to right: Opening Rally (USSFAtlanta); Mississippi Youth (Jonathan Lawson); Take Back The City workshop (Sandy Reid); No Raids (Pat); Atlanta Housing Protest (John Slaughter); next three photos: Nada Khader, WESPAC Foundation; Domestic Worker Organizers (Sandy Reid); Hip-Hop Workshop, (Kimberly King); New Orleans Housing Organizers (Sandy Reid).



Fresno celebration calls for unity in black and brown community

By Rev. Floyd D. Harris

Early one recent Saturday morning, the West Fresno Community awoke to a surprise Block Party Celebration called "Unity in the Black and Brown Community" organized by Rev. Floyd D. Harris Jr., founder of National Network In Action, a national civil and human rights organization, and Cammie Belt of Fresno Emergency Printing. Over 300 people attended. There was entertainment, free food, health screening, music, AIDS information, and what to do when confronted by Police. The community had wanted to bring people together to celebrate victory over forces that had torn down the community's positive spirit by promoting an atmosphere of apprehension and suspicion.

I spoke about why the community must get involved and hold their government officials accountable. I reminded the diverse crowd that for 11 years the community has been trying to get an independent police auditor, but that there are individuals on the Fresno City Council who do not feel you deserve what is best. There are police officers who don't live in our community who come in with a bounce house and hot dogs and pat our 5-year-old children on the head. But when the children become 15 years of age, they shoot them in the back, unarmed. Fresno County has the largest Juvenile Hall facility, with 1400 beds for children. But the community took a stand for justice for the homeless when their rights were violated by the Fresno Police Department who threw

away their personal belongings.

It's time to come out of the Church House and go into the community where God's people are suffering. We can accomplish great things through working together. The educational system is failing. For our children to be leaders, we must demand better education. Children who are in the 9th grade are reading on a 3rd grade level and are being set up for prison. The growing Prison Industrial Complex, comprised of American corporations who gain profits which roll off the backs of prison inmates, unjustly pays cents on the dollar. Youth are herded into private prison enterprises to work illegally under a modern day slave system called "involuntary servitude," disguised as prison work release programs. Approximately 8 percent of Black males between 25 and 29 were incarcerated in 2005 and almost 30,000 for Black females. Yet, the numbers being incarcerated are rising for all nationalities. Meanwhile, in 2005, the Federal Prison Industries, named UNICOR generated \$765 million in sales from its 106 factories.

Are your eyes wide open? I ask you — who is benefiting by your child going to prison? Is this a set-up? Block celebrations are needed all over West Fresno. If you would like a Victory Celebration in your neighborhood, contact National Network In Action (NNIA); email xyfloyd@aol.com or write P.O. Box 16127 Fresno, CA. 93755-6127, Phone 559-803-0286 or visit www.nationalnetworkinaction.org.



Marching at the US Social Forum in Atlanta in June.

PHOTO/KIMBERLY KING

Some Big Corporations That Use Prison Labor

MicroJet, Nike, Loakhart Technologies, Inc., TWA, Dell Computers, Microsoft, Eddie Bauer, Planet Hollywood, Wilson Sporting Goods, J.C. Penney, Victoria's Secret, Best Western Hotels, Honda, K-Mart, Target, McDonald's, Burger King, "Prison Blues" jeans line, New York, New York Hotel/Casino, Imperial Palace Hotel/Casino, "No Fear" Clothing Line, C.M.T. Blues, Konica, Allstate, Merryl Lynch, Shearson Lehman, Louisiana Pacific, Parke-Davis and Upjohn. (Source: the Mandala Project's "U.S. Prison Labor at Home and Abroad.")

ARRESTED

By Dr. June Scorza Terpstra

On Thursday evening, March 8, International Women's Day, I was arrested by Evanston, Ill. police. I was made to step out of my car; my hands were cuffed behind my back as I stood in the dark street with three young, pig-gish male officers. I was asked if I had \$100 cash. In cars stopped at the nearest cross light people stared at me. My person, my car and my purse were searched. I was asked if I had anything up my crotch. I was placed in the suffocating back seat of a squad car and taken to the Evanston police station. Unknown to me at the time, I was video tape recorded by the police with out notice or my permission.

They asked if I take drugs. I said, "No, do you?" I was told I thought I was "above the law" by a boy given

deadly toys to protect his master's money and rules and to whom I refused to defer. For further intimidation I was threatened with a strip search and a jail cell. My husband bailed me out.

What was my crime? I had failed to pay a speeding ticket in Kansas about a year ago and lost the ticket. My license was suspended and I never received notice in my moving. I have founded programs for women and children in Evanston and have been teaching social justice at universities and colleges for over 20 years. Yet three uniformed robo-boys bereft of minds and hearts rummaged through my car stocked with baby seats for grandkids and kid's toys for my weekend birthday party with my grandchildren. They put me in the back of the police car, my wrists burning from the handcuffs. My blood pressure soared: I was unable to breathe for the first minutes, struck down powerless

against armed boys "following procedure." If I had been arrested for practicing my constitutional right to dissolve this present government, I could have understood the situation. This arrest was for the crime of not paying \$150 for driving my car too fast. Debtor's prisons are now one of the features of a police state in which 2.5 million people are presently in the prison system of the USA with over 60% of the people imprisoned for non-violent offenses.

In this instant what I teach became very real. I understood ten times better how each of us is criminalized in the USA. Students tell me they are routinely stopped, harassed, shoved up against cars and searched by the police in their neighborhoods. I remember the battered woman and rape victim victimized by the police. I see political prisoners such as Dr. Sami al-Arian, Leonard Peltier and Jose Padilla, tortured and tormented by

their captors. I see Arab men, brown bags over their heads, forced out of their homes, disappeared and sexually humiliated. I remember the boy cop looking me in the eyes and sneering, "Do you have anything up your crotch?" The image of the Mexican woman struggling across the border violently caught and marched off and then raped in holding pens is in my mind as this arresting "officer of the law" threatens to have me strip-searched and put in a cell.

I recall all of these and more now, as I recall the empty eyes of the police, when they told me I was under arrest. I realize yet again that I am the arrested and the imprisoned and that they are me. I, a teacher, always have been them and they have always been me.

*In Solidarity for the Liberation of the Oppressed,
Dr. June Scorza Terpstra*

DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS

From the Editors

The U.S. Senate failed again in June, in its second attempt to pass an immigration “reform” bill. While it is still unclear what will eventually pass in the future, one thing is certain — the giant global corporations that have effectively become the government of our country intend to dictate an approach to immigration that will serve their interests.

But where do the interests of we, the people, lie? The answer is: our interests lie in defending the human rights of all of us, regardless of nationality or immigration status. We as human beings cannot stand by while children, mothers and fathers are branded “illegal,” rounded up like animals, placed in detention centers and then shipped across the same border that corporations freely cross each day in their search for profit. We must be uncompromising on the basis of morality and human rights. Politicians are prepared to negotiate away these rights. While we welcome any concessions that alleviate the suffering of some, we remain uncompromising on the goal of defending human rights and alleviating the suffering of all.

Every country is facing social and political problems connected to immigration. The huge international migrations we are seeing today are rooted in the worldwide introduction of labor-replacing electronic technology and globalization, which are creating an international production process based on an international market. Just as globalization is doing away with international barriers to the free flow of capital, labor is likewise migrating to where the jobs can be found.

Immigrants are under attack in many countries, including the U.S. The goal of the attack in the U.S. is clear: to divide the American people by isolating the immigrant. The corporations want to get a large section of the people to support eliminating the civil liberties of immigrants, and in the process eliminate everyone’s rights.

Why? Because the global corporations cannot promise a job or a safety net to anyone, documented or undocumented. Poverty and unemployment are increasing for all workers in our country, and people are beginning to question the system that is producing that poverty. The danger facing the corporations is that the people will unite, regardless of nationality, on the basis of the struggle for food, housing, health-care and education, and fight for a society that will serve their needs, rather than the profit-driven needs of the corporations. Thus we are witnessing an effort to isolate the immigrant as part of



Immigrant workers protest in Atlanta.

PHOTO/PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

a drive toward outright fascism.

There is no such thing as an “illegal” worker. By globalizing production, the corporations globalize the working class. This issue is not simply a fight for immigrant rights, as important as that is. It is a fight for the human rights of every person on this earth.

July 4, 2007

You're not a capitalist...Why support their system?

By Nelson Peery

On July 4, we celebrate our country’s birthday. While we celebrate, we often fail to ask ourselves, “Why did we separate ourselves from feudal England?” The answer that “we wanted to be independent” begs the next question: “Why did we want to be independent?” We wanted to separate ourselves from feudal England because we were not feudalists and were not part of their system.

That thinking is very applicable for this Fourth of July, 2007. We again need to ask ourselves, “We are not capitalists so why should we support their system?”

Over the course of some 200 years, there were reasons that the workers supported the capitalist system. As the United States economically and politically conquered most of the world, the ruling class gave part of the plunder to the American people as a bribe for their political and military support. The workers in a good portion of the world did not believe that there was any poverty in the United States, and everyone was a capitalist.

At the end of World War II, this rul-

ing class embarked on its greatest effort—the destruction of the socialist sector of the world. They needed more support than ever from the masses. To achieve this support, they increased the bribe and millions of workers began to purchase houses and automobiles. The workers understandably felt they had an economic stake in the system. That was not enough. The ruling class knew they also had to have the hearts and minds of the people. Every sort of lie, slander, distortion of history, and appeal to racism and to nationalism smothered the political and social consciousness of the people.

Murder, frame-ups, blacklisting and ostracism faced those who would not submit. Thought control almost took over our country. Only approved books could be read, certain subjects could not be discussed, and opposition was equated with treason. The democratic practice of lively political discussion among workers was lost. As young generations matured, they accepted what they inherited and few even thought to question the system.

Times are rapidly changing. With globalization and automation, the ruling class no longer needs to bribe the

workers for their support. If the American workers won’t work for “competitive” wages, starving workers from other countries will. The auto industry’s brutal, callous attempt to force their workers to accept cuts in wages and standards of living is just the latest example.

Yet, under the terrible circumstances of hunger, homelessness, lack of medical care, or lockouts, few workers raise the question of the system. They have been trained to blame individuals or political parties. They will never blame the system unless they are challenged to do so.

Herein lies the importance of the Fourth of July. Just as the people of the 1770s had to be challenged—“What the heck do we need a king for? We’re not part of that system”—so today we have to challenge the workers, employed and unemployed: “You’re not a capitalist. Why support their system?”

Nelson Peery’s new book, *Black Radical: The Education of an American Revolutionary*, will be in bookstores in August. You can order by sending \$29 to *Speakers for a New America*, c/o People’s Tribune, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654.



Send for FREE copies of the new Speakers for a New America brochure.

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UTILITY RATE HIKES:

Profiteering in Illinois

By Sheridan Talbott

By now probably every person in the state of Illinois knows Ameren/ComEd raised utility rates last January. Everyone knows the utilities' initial estimate of a 30% to 50% increase was low, way low. The rate hikes actually range from 100% to 200%, some higher. People are having to struggle to pay their utility bill if they can—and many can't.

Both utilities show total indifference to the crushing effect these rate hikes are having on the paychecks of those who actually work for a living in Illinois—or try to. And consequences for the state's economy are also grim.

The Citizens Utility Board, a "watchdog" organization, released a study indicating 20,000 jobs could be lost in Illinois due to the hikes. The hikes will siphon \$2.3 billion out of Illinois' economy each year, creating even more unemployment and a further decline in our standard of living. In Southern Illinois—where I live—this process has already begun.

Ameren and Com/Ed use the same old shibboleths we heard many times before to justify their rate hikes; the need to remain "economically feasible," to remain "cost effective," the possibility of bankruptcy without the increases. You believe that?

Fact is, in 2006 Ameren reported record profits. So far this year, in the first quarter of 2007 alone, profits have jumped 76%. We're talking about \$123 million for the first quarter of 2007 compared with \$70 million for the same 3 months in 2006. "Profiteering," orchestrated "windfall profits?" What would you call it?

Residents, stunned and angered at first, are now organizing resistance to the hikes. On May 9, 2007, over 1,000 people from all across the state came together in Springfield and marched on the State Capitol. They marched with a singular purpose and a simple demand—no rate hikes.

The effects of the march and the ongoing criticism remain to be seen. Ameren and ComEd appear undaunted.

They still insist the hikes are necessary if they are to survive, and recently threatened to challenge the constitutionality of any legislative acts to turn rates back to 2006 levels. They seem confident the outcome will be in their interest as if they already have the lawmakers in their pockets.

Well, since January the actions of our representatives in Springfield are reminiscent of the Key Stone Cops. The governor claims it's a legislative matter and does nothing. The legislature entangles itself in a juggernaut of its own making, and nothing gets done. It's a fiasco. Meanwhile, the people of Illinois continue paying the higher rates. Hard to believe the legislative chaos in Springfield isn't by design, isn't chicanery.

We've heard the political speeches and seen the photo ops. We've read the quotes of empathy. Meanwhile \$2.3 billion a year continues to be siphoned out of our pockets and into the already deep pockets of the corporate stockholders of Ameren and ComEd.

Jobs being lost, poverty deepening, health care in trouble, schools in trouble, gas over \$3 a gallon, and now our utility bills doubled and tripled. When is enough, enough?

We the people are living in an economic crisis of our own down here on earth and could use a little "economic feasibility" ourselves, a little "cost effectiveness." We the people built everything in this State except big bank accounts.

Use "Eminent Domain" based on the "common good," relieve Ameren and ComEd of all corporate holdings in Illinois and turn them into public property. It's a step in the right direction.

Not legal? Really? Too radical? Why? Wal-Mart now has the "right," and has successfully used it with help from government, to seize privately owned property for its "private" use and gain. And this in the name of the "Common Good."

Let's keep the pressure on. Let's increase it.

Hate begets more hatred

By Jan LightfootLane

It's finally time to break the cycle of hating our neighbor. Words must overcome guns. Often society exclaims that "terrorists are trying to make a statement." If that is true, all we need to do to halt terrorism is to LISTEN.

An inherent right is one granted by God, not by our government. Free Will also means the right to address wrongful actions of the government. Actions which deliver less than fairness are fascist and unlawful. Any person in a free society should be allowed redress of such unthinkable actions. Otherwise we Americans enjoy the illusion of Justice for all. We are no better, no freer than people in Iraq when our ordinary citizens are denied use of our courts.

As someone operating the statewide Homeless Crisis Hotline, it is my job to provide accurate information to families on the cusp of, or suffering from homelessness. This is impossible, when cities and towns lie about the requirements of General Assistance, aid given by the town.

This action violates the theory of "Fairness of the Law," as well as my Creator-given, 1st Amendment right to effectively assist the homeless.

The first case I filed was dis-

missed with the words of "in other words, LightfootLane has no standing to complain that their [her] government is violating the law." The Court failed to understand the issues or importance of this case. It is to eradicate actions of hate, against the underpaid.

I have again filed a legal suit in Bangor Federal District Court, on Law Day, May 1, 2007, in hopes that this time the courts will HEAR the case. Or that readers will write the Court Demanding the Case 1:07-cv-56 be heard in its entirety. It's time the Courts show compassion, not hate, by listening to valid cases of its citizens.

The address is: US District Court PO Box 1007 Bangor ME USA 04402. If the court knows that everyday people know about this case, they are less likely to dismiss.

Please also send a copy of your brief letter asking that case 1:07-cv-56 be heard to me, Jan LightfootLane, PO Box 62, Hinckley, ME 04944.

In Maine and the USA Federal Courts, listening means hearing the full legal action, then deciding cases upon the facts. Today, valid and important cases are routinely dismissed due to lack of having the funds to hire a lawyer. The USA is less likely to "Listen today" than in 1976—the last full year the average citizen had a

"right to be heard in the US Supreme Court."

Soon after losing that right, to US Supreme Court review, the Courts started ruling that average people should instinctively know the pleadings of cases, or they shall have their valid case dismissed without trial.

In that same period, rights of the poor stood still, or declined. Relatively no advancement against Poverty has been made since the 1980s ushered in. Poverty is a symptom of hate.

The premature dismissal of legal cases, is based upon either lack of jurisdiction. That amounts to the court not "understanding the issues." Or cases are ejected because Courts strictly apply the Rules of pleadings for the non-lawyer. State and Federal Courts are more stringent with the ordinary person seeking justice than with practicing lawyers who goof.

It's time to reassert our right to be heard. We should be heard in any court in this nation. To be able to bring or defend cases is the essence of liberty. Hearing cases is the beginning of understanding, which summons the end of hate.

Jan LightfootLane
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Los Angeles: The battle for quality, public education

By Chris Venn

In May, Strong American Schools (SAS) announced the launch of “Ed in 08” and its goal of ensuring that the nation engages in a rigorous debate and to make education a top priority in the 2008 presidential election. This \$60 million effort will be funded by significant grants from Bill Gates (Microsoft Corporation) and Eli Broad (Los Angeles real estate developer).

Led by Roy Romer (former governor of Colorado, ex-head of the Los Angeles Schools and the Democratic National Committee) and Mark Lampkin (of George Bush’s 2000 campaign), this campaign will push more privatization of public education and more charter schools, at the expense of poor children, especially those of color.

“The A Team is on the move,” said Steve Teixeira, Student Support Services, California State University, L.A. “This has never been done before as an idea campaign in a presidential campaign. Strong American Schools will spend \$60 million in pure agitation and propaganda.”

This was the premier point of discussion at a meeting of the Los Angeles chapter of Quality Education as a Civil Right (QECR) this past May 27. At the meeting, Bob Moses, the veteran civil rights leader, noted that the U.S. Constitution reads “We the people...” and that this emphasizes the importance of the common people in defining what’s best for us. QECR is a national organization



Attendees at the Quality Education as a Civil Right event in L.A.

PHOTO/DONATED TO PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE

that works with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, public officials, legal experts and community members to transform American public education into an international model of excellence for all of America’s students. Fifty serious leaders from across the city attended.

“You could easily think that the arguments for public education, whether they be from the point of view of business, self-improvement or as a way to

confront racism, are the same,” said Masie Chin, Lead Organizer of CADRE (Community Asset Development Redefining Education). “When you have people in power contending for education, you have a fractured movement where so many are being bamboozled. Their plight is being used for various agendas.”

“Strong American Schools is going to monopolize the public,” Masie said. “The arguments will be made for stan-

dardization and high standards based on the needs of corporations.”

The feeling of the majority of the attendees at the QECR gathering is that education priorities have to be up to the people who are most directly affected: the parents, teachers and community members, and education has to be a vehicle for a better future for all of our families and our world, not a tool of corporations.

1,500 protest planned L.A. bus fare hike of nearly 300%

By Barbara Planek

The day started with more than 200 people protesting inside and outside Los Angeles’ Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Building. As the boardroom became filled they were forced to open four overflow rooms, including the cafeteria, in an attempt to accommodate the crowds. By early afternoon the Fire Department came and shut down the building.

With five hours of outstanding and moving testimony given by over 320 people and the enormous turnout, it looked to be an easy victory for the people.

Proposed rate increases over the next two years would severely cripple the lives of many impoverished people for whom the bus is their only mode of transportation. There is a great push for people to use the Metro Rail system, but this is not a viable solution for the increase in MTA rates, as the Metro only goes to specific places and leaves long distances to still be traveled. The more rails they build, the more the pressure comes to increase the MTA rate, basically using a trickle-down theory to the folk most in need.

The Bus Riders Union and its allies held a rally outside the mayor’s recent State of the City Address, calling on Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to reject MTA’s recently announced fare increase proposal. If approved, it will double and triple the prices of MTA fares and discounted passes which will cause irreparable harm on primar-

ily Black and Latino female L.A. inner city residents.

The proposed fare hike would destroy progress on achieving a living wage for the thousands of transit-dependent families in Los Angeles, most of whom earn an average family income of \$12,000 per year.

This rate increase will make it virtually impossible for poor, elderly, workers, students and handicapped people to do essential errands such as doctor appointments, work, school, and grocery shopping, to mention a few.

The proposed breakdown was:

	Current	2008	2009
Regular	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$ 2.00
Day Pass	\$3.00	\$5.00	8.00
Week Pass	\$14.00	\$20.00	\$32.00
Month Pass	\$52.00	\$72.00	\$120.00
Student Pass	\$20.00	\$45.00	\$72.00
College Pass	\$30.00	\$52.00	\$84.00
EZ Pass	\$58.00	\$95.00	\$140.00
Senior Pass	\$12.00	\$37.50	\$60.00

This is being viewed as a further attack on poor people in L.A., and has caused many groups to band together, including students, to rally for opposition to the proposal and place pressure on Mayor Villaraigosa

and his three MTA appointees, telling them that they cannot balance the highway and rail budget on the backs of low-income bus riders.

After the long grueling day with testimony from elderly, students, disabled, doctors and the like, the vote came down and the fare increase has been moved up to July 1, 2007 with continued increases to follow every two years.

Approved rate increases are as follows:

	Current	7/1/07
Regular	\$1.25	\$1.25
Day Pass	\$3.00	\$5.00
Week Pass	\$14.00	\$ 17.00
Month Pass	\$ 52.00	\$ 62.00
Student Pass	\$ 20.00	\$ 24.00
College Pass	\$ 30.00	\$ 36.00
EZ Pass	\$ 58.00	\$ 70.00
Senior Pass	\$ 12.00	\$ 14.00

The plan was more stringent than the one proposed by Mayor Villaraigosa, which was a 5% increase over the next five years.

With more increases on the horizon, the Bus Riders Union says that the MTA is risking a federal lawsuit, chanting “Fight transit racism. See you in court.”

THE BENTON HARBOR, MICH. COMMUNITY SPEAKS OUT

Editor’s note: Benton Harbor, Mich., sits on beautiful Lake Michigan. Once a thriving industrial town, automation and globalization has created a 70% unemployment rate. The local government, controlled by Whirlpool Corporation, is leading plans to turn the city into an expensive resort area minus the poor. The quotes below show the raging struggle against corporate power for justice.

“My husband, Rev. Edward Pinkney, is being followed by a special investigator. The financial expenditure to hold hearings and trials, and now to hire this person, could be spent to lift our community out of poverty. On April 15, 2005, justice in Berrien County took a giant step backwards. I am ashamed to claim Berrien County, Michigan as my home — a county that is known for police beating and killing of Blacks. Berrien County will forever be known as the county where Judge Paul Maloney stole an election from the people of Benton Harbor. Judge Maloney is a well-known racist. The people of Benton Harbor believe it was all about race. I, however, believe it was about the “haves”: Whirlpool, Cornerstone Alliance, and Gov. Granholm. My husband was charged

with four felonies and one misdemeanor, “crimes” that were created by the Berrien County justice system. I attended my husband’s “voter fraud” recall trial every day, and trust me, it was not about justice. In March 2006, my husband’s first trial ended in a mistrial. There were two Blacks on the jury. My husband had complained for five years about the systematic exclusion and under-representation of Black jurors in the Berrien County court system. When his second trial had an all-white jury in our city, which is 96% Black, I knew this would be a problem. Midway through the trial the Judge locked the Courtroom to spectators, who could only come in before the session began. Security was increased. The jury reaction was to retreat into the blind desire to uphold the system as in the South, where a Black man’s word meant nothing. The prosecutor Gerald Vignansky’s poisonous behavior had the obnoxious odor of a racist. This man fabricated and falsified evidence, bribed witnesses, and then threatened his own witness because he would not perjure himself. We must stand up and defend democracy.”

— Mrs. Dorothy Pinkney

“On July 2, 2007, at 4 a.m., a cross-burning ceremony took place in Benton Harbor on the front lawn of Addie Kyle, a well-known



Mary Carter, a Benton Harbor senior citizen, stands in the historic Jean Klock Park overlooking Lake Michigan. Whirlpool and the developers are trying to turn the town’s park into an expensive golf course.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Black woman and resident for over 40 years. The Supreme Court banned cross burnings carried out with the intent to intimidate. Cross burnings are an instrument of terror and are inextricably intertwined with the history of the Ku Klux Klan, which following its formation in 1866, imposed a reign of terror throughout the South, whipping and murdering Blacks...Wilson Chandler, a graduate of Benton Harbor High School, was selected in the first round of the NBA draft by the NY Knicks. He received several death threats saying, ‘Mr N*****, you will never sign that million dollar contract.’ When do the people stand up and say no more?”

— Rev. Edward Pinkney

“The homeless have no hope for a job, no vision. Some have no education to get the jobs that are here today. It

sometimes makes people insane. The government could build halfway homes and furnish them.”

— Orlandis Page, a homeless man

“People are desperate. They are taking aluminum off houses or stealing air conditioners to sell the copper. One man was electrocuted trying to get copper off a phone pole. The economy is forcing people to do things they’ve never done. The corporations are taking over, destroying the neighborhoods, not caring that what they do to people. It’s all about making money.”

— Mary Carter

“The ‘leaders’ of Benton Harbor have taken out a mortgage on the future of our children. The people have been given a bad check. Mark Mitchell, Marcus Robinson, Rose Red Hunt, Greg Vaughn, City Manager Pete Mitchell, Rev. James Atterberry, and many pastors and commissioners — you know who you are. [GOD] is watching you. Stop the take-over by Whirlpool and Harbor Shores.”

— Rev. D. Smith

“Benton Harbor has many water shut-offs. Why can’t they put the water on and then make arrangements for people to pay? This is not white people. This is my own race. We have incompetent people as our City Officials. I am getting petitions and maybe someone will listen and not treat us as nobody.”

— Effie Y. Brown, a life-long resident



Rev. Edward Pinkney.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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